



Province of the
EASTERN CAPE
COOPERATIVE GOVERNANCE
& TRADITIONAL AFFAIRS

COGTA

Newsletter

JUNE 2025



“ Makana is a critical municipality. Administrative failures are compromising the entire system. We must grab the issue by the scruff of the neck and push forward. ”

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EDITORIAL COMMENT



Editor: Ms Thando Sonjica

In this quarter the Eastern Cape Province is grappling with the aftermath of devastating floods, which resulted in tragic loss of lives, with the death toll rising to 103, and thousands of people displaced from their homes. Infrastructure including roads, bridges, schools, and healthcare facilities have suffered extensive damages, requiring significant financial investment for repairs. Essential services like electricity and water supply have also been affected, impacting the daily lives of residents.

The floods have also caused widespread damage to agricultural crops and livestock, impacting the livelihoods and the local economy and communities.

Speaking during a recent media briefing in Mthatha, MEC Zolile Williams representing the Eastern Cape Provincial Government, offered sincere condolences to all the bereaved families for the loss of their loved ones during the disaster. "Indeed, this moment will be recorded among the most agonising chapters in the history of our province. While we have borne witness to the tragedies that claimed the lives of our people before, this one resonates on a profoundly deeper level, it wounds the very foundation of our hearts."

In partnership with humanitarian organisations such as Gift of the Givers, Al Imdaad, the Black Coffee Foundation and Asfraful Aid as well as the private sector including Old Mutual, MTN, local businesses and supermarkets, relief support continues to reach communities whose homes and belongings were destroyed by the floods. Details are on page 2.

On pages 7 and 9 we report about Deputy Minister of Cogta Dr Masemola and MEC Williams conducted monitoring visits in BCM and Makana municipalities regarding systematic failures that compromise the delivery of services.

Other stories focus on empowering disaster management on page 4, Youth Day Celebrations, page 5, launch of the winter season of Ulwaluko, page 6, public participation forum page 7, and many more.

Always remember, Disaster is everyone's responsibility.

Enjoy the read.

Contents

3. Government officially declares a national disaster in response to widespread destruction caused by severe weather
4. FPASA partnership forged to enhance fire service standards
4. MEC Williams engages with faith based organisations during the Easter weekend
5. Premier commits to equip youth with tools and opportunities to lead
5. Traditional leaders propose changes to the white paper on local government which is under review
6. AmaMpondomise Kingdom hosts winter customary initiation launch
7. Cogta champions for a bold new public participation model
7. Deputy Minister Masemola conducts oversight visit to BCM
8. Chairpersons forum spearheads leading conversations
8. Community empowerment through participatory development
9. Minister Masemola leads oversight visit amid governance and service delivery challenges in Makana
10. Introduction of RAS yields positive results on grant spending
11. PDMC collaborates spearheads leading conversations
12. Strategic communication plan unveiled to guide municipal governance ahead of 2026 Local elections

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GOVERNMENT OFFICIALLY DECLARES

A NATIONAL DISASTER IN RESPONSE TO WIDESPREAD DESTRUCTION CAUSED BY SEVERE WEATHER

By Thando Sonjica

South African Government has officially declared a National Disaster in response to the widespread destruction caused by the severe weather, following a comprehensive assessment of the ongoing crisis. “The declaration, made in terms of the Disaster Management Act (Act No. 57 of 2002), comes amid heavy rainfall, flooding, strong winds, and snowfall that have battered parts of the country, with the Eastern Cape being the hardest hit”.

This was revealed by MEC for the department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (Cogta), Zolile Williams during a media briefing held in Mthatha on 26 June, amid the devastation caused by the extreme weather events that hit Eastern Cape Province between the 9th and 10th of June 2025.

“Let me again, on behalf of the Eastern Cape Provincial Government, begin by extending our deepest and heartfelt condolences to all the families who have lost loved ones during this tragedy. Indeed, this moment will be recorded among the most agonising chapters in our province's history. While we have borne witness to tragedies that claimed the lives of our people before, this one resonates on a profoundly deeper level, it wounds the very foundation of our hearts.

MEC Williams said whilst the 9 - 10 June 2025 disastrous floods featured across the Province, Amathole and O.R. Tambo Districts remained the hardest hit areas due to loss of lives and the displacement of families, damaged infrastructure, livestock losses and learners missing examinations.

MEC highlighted that it was important to note that amongst those who lost their lives, the provincial government also mourn the loss of public servants through these tragic events. “These were our first respondents and we are grateful for the contribution they made in their life time. We continue to work closely with families to provide psychosocial, spiritual, and logistical support during this painful time.

In partnership with humanitarian organisations such as Gift of the Givers, Al Imdaad, the Black Coffee Foundation and Asrafal Aid as well as the private sector including Old Mutual, MTN, local businesses and supermarkets, relief support continues to reach communities whose homes and belongings were destroyed by the floods. These collaborations underscore the power of public-private partnerships in responding swiftly to emergencies.

In addition, he said the Provincial Government also wished to acknowledge and commend ongoing support from ordinary citizens who have extended a helping hand to those in need. We wish to express deep appreciation to those whose presence and contributions have brought hope and comfort to the affected families during this time of need.

However, MEC said government continued to appeal for continued support from the private sector, businesses, and individuals to assist with donations of food, clothing, blankets, furniture and other essentials. “Every contribution makes a meaningful difference in helping communities recover and rebuild. Together, we can ensure that no one is left behind as we work to restore dignity and hope to those impacted by this disaster.

Additionally, he said government through the Department of Education and SASSA provided financial assistance to the families to assist with preparations for the funerals. We remain grateful to our social partners who have provided groceries to the families.

With regards to provision of government services, MEC emphasised that since the onset of the disaster, the Department of Social Development, supported by private sector partners, has extended crucial psychosocial support to all affected communities, ranging from displaced families and those grieving loved ones, to schools that have lost learners in this tragedy. “These services, which encompass

counselling and emotional debriefing, are foundational to the healing and recovery process. Given the profound impact of the incident, we recognise this journey may be prolonged for those most deeply affected. Rest assured, these vital support services will remain in place, guiding our communities toward restoration and hope. MEC Williams further told the briefing that on-site Healthcare services were also available, with the Department of Health providing medical assistance and replacing chronic medication that was swept away by the floods to those in need. We continue to also assess any health risks at the temporary shelters. He explained that the Department of Home Affairs has been on hand at various temporary shelters across the Amathole and O.R. Tambo District Municipalities to assist families to apply for critical documents such as Identity Documents, Birth and Death certificates.

He said through the Department of Education delivery of Learner and Teacher Support Material lost or destroyed during the disaster has begun. We are also ensuring that uniform sets for learners in the flood affected schools has also resumed through the Provincial Department of Education..

With regards to restoration of basic services, MEC said despite the devastation, notable progress with the restoration of water and electricity in affected areas has been made . “The electricity supply has been restored to over 80% of affected customers, with over 95% of the water supply having been restored in OR Tambo and Amathole District Municipality, which were the most affected areas. On damaged infrastructure he said assessments have been done and finalised and the costs of repairing damaged infrastructure was estimated at R5, 1 billion. About R3, 2 billion required across sector departments and R 1, 8 billion for the Municipal Infrastructure as per MISA assessments.

He said the Department of Human Settlements, in partnership with the OR Tambo District Municipality, have successfully activated mass-care shelters, including bed-and-breakfast facilities and community halls, to provide immediate housing for displaced families in OR Tambo and Mquma. These arrangements will remain in place for a 30-day period. Concurrently, the Provincial Government is securing land to facilitate the delivery Temporary Residential Units and permanent housing, ensuring that our response addresses both urgent needs and long- term stability for these vulnerable communities.

“Currently, land has been identified in Mquma for approximately 1 100 temporary residential units, while in the King Sabata Dalindyebo Municipality, land has been identified and we await a council resolution on the matter.

On road infrastructure, repair costs are estimated at R935 million, of which R102 million has been reprioritised from the Department of Transport budget, leaving a deficit of R832 million for which an intervention is required.

With regards to Donor Support, MEC said government was grateful for the outpouring of love and support directed to our communities as they continue to navigate through this painful period. “We wish to acknowledge donations and pledges received from international partners/donors, UN Intervention through various agencies such as UNPFA, Traditional Leadership, Non-Governmental Organisations, Community Based Organisations, Religious Fraternity, Private Sector, and communities in general. He added that donations management approach has been reviewed and strengthened to ensure improved accountability.

Finally, MEC Williams expressed Provincial government's our gratitude to all emergency responders, volunteers, and officials across all levels of government. “Their tireless work in the face of adversity has kept the spirit of Ubuntu alive. We are resilient people. The road ahead is long, but together, we will rise.



L-R MECs, Thandokazi Capa, Zolile Williams and Fundile Gade



L-R Acting HoD for Cogta, Mr Vuyo Mlokothe, Chief Director Provincial Communications, Ms Khuselwa Rantjie and OR Tambo Municipal Manager Mr Basil Mase

FPASA PARTNERSHIP FORGED TO ENHANCE FIRE SERVICE STANDARDS

By Vuyani Sibene

The Eastern Cape Provincial Disaster Management Centre (EC PDMC), in partnership with the Fire Protection Association of Southern Africa (FPASA), concluded a Fire Services Classification Survey across the province, focussing on municipalities that deliver fire services.

“We have conducted an assessment and FPASA augmented the report, that some municipalities do not have fire services. Our focus is on prevention and fire risk reduction in municipalities,” said Mr Philela Mabandla who is the Director for the Provincial Disaster Management and Fire Services in welcoming the partnership with FPASA.

In addition, Mr Mabandla said the classification surveys form part of a broader national initiative, where the FPASA has been appointed by Santam and the South African Insurance Association (SAIA) as the non-life insurance industry's implementing partner for the SAIA Fire Property Protection Projects. A major milestone was reached on 21 May 2025 at the EC PDMC, in Bhisho, where a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was officially signed between CoGTA and FPASA. The MoU represents a commitment to strengthen collaboration, enhance the quality of fire services in the province, and promote shared accountability between public institutions and private partners.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, Mr Marius Atterbury, who is the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of FPASA, emphasized the significance of the partnership and said, “These organized collaborations to deal with hazards and fire awareness services are deeply valued. The provincial report will be submitted to the PDMC. Already we have the MoUs with the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal provinces, in line with our national obligations to support the development of SANS 10090 standards and administer, analyse, and report on data uploaded by municipalities via the FPASA App,” said Mr Atterbury.

He added that these partnerships are key to develop community-level fire protection frameworks and foster national consistency in service delivery. Ms Charity Sihunu, acting Deputy Director General (DDG) for Local Government in Cogta echoed these sentiments, highlighting the urgency of innovative collaboration amid financial constraints. Noting the shrinking fiscus she said, it was important to be innovative and foster partnerships to assist the department not to compromise the delivery of services.

“Let us be reminded that as the Minister of Finance will deliver the third-term budget speech, the country faces a shortfall of approximately R70 billion. That calls for us to scratch our heads in search of alternative sources of (financial) support.” She further stated that the partnership with FPASA is a practical expression of the slogan, “Working together we can do more.” Referring to national guidelines, Ms Sihunu emphasized alignment with the White Paper on Fire Services.

“The rescue and revitalization of fire services must be measured against clear, reasonable, practical, and significant standards. These standards must not be a ‘one size fits all’ but rather be determined by each respective fire service. A differentiated approach, based on local risk and capacity, must form the backbone of these standards.”

She concluded by reaffirming that the ongoing evaluations will lay the groundwork for future measurement activities. “These evaluations are not just assessments but critical steps towards aligning fire services with government's vision of professional, responsive, and resilient communities.”



L-R Mr Atterbury, Ms Sihunu and Mr Mabandla

MEC WILLIAMS ENGAGES WITH FAITH BASED ORGANISATIONS DURING THE EASTER WEEKEND

By Vuyani Sibene

As part of his stakeholder engagement sessions with Faith Based Organisations (FBO), the MEC for CoGTA, Zolile Williams, visited the Gods Heart Family Church in Ezibeleni in Komani and the Methodist Church in Dutywa during the Easter weekend. During his address, MEC Williams emphasized the government's role as a pillar in God's creation, responsible for administering justice, ensuring peace, and serving the people with compassion and integrity. He framed his role as a conduit for delivering God's message of hope.

“I am Gabriel (a messenger) who delivers services to the people. I urge municipal leaders to jerk up, enhance service delivery, by focusing on environmental care, including street cleaning, pothole repairs, gravesite maintenance, and addressing sewage issues to strengthen good governance,” said MEC Williams.

MEC Williams said efficient and responsible public institutions are essential to meet the needs of the populace. Concluding his remarks, he referenced to the wisdom of African ancestors and the importance of Ubuntu, advocating for leadership that reflects the principle of “I am because we are,” emphasizing that governing is a service-oriented responsibility.



MEC Williams singing at the Methodist church

PREMIER COMMITS TO EQUIP YOUTH WITH TOOLS AND OPPORTUNITIES TO LEAD

By Sabo Dlelengana

Cacadu town (formerly Lady Frere) in Emalahleni Local Municipality came alive on 16 June 2025 as it hosted the Provincial Youth Day celebrations under the theme “Gear Up for Greatness.” Thousands of young people from across the Eastern Cape gathered to honour the legacy of the 1976 youth while looking ahead to the future they are actively shaping.

A standout feature of the event was the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) bringing government closer to the people through its “Services on Wheels” programme. Mobile units were stationed across the event grounds, offering youth and community members access to essential services such as identity document applications, municipal support queries, job readiness assistance, and information on youth development programmes.

COGTA's presence was met with enthusiasm, especially by rural youth who often struggle with access to government services. “Bringing these services directly to our communities means that we no longer have to travel long distances to access help. It's empowering,” said one local youth, Nomzamo Velem.

Keynote address was delivered by Eastern Cape Premier Oscar Mabuyane, who passionately urged young people to become drivers of transformation in their communities. In his speech, Premier Mabuyane stated “We honour the fearless youth of 1976 by investing in today's generation. The future of our province rests on your shoulders and as government, we are committed to equipping you with the tools and opportunities to lead. Youth development is not a slogan it is a commitment, and we are acting on it.”



Ms Dlelengane, Principal Communication Officer at Cogta handing over information leaflets to learners

Premier Mabuyane also emphasised the importance of economic inclusion, education, and skills development as critical components for tackling unemployment and inequality among youth. He reassured attendees of the provincial government's dedication to expanding youth employment programmes and supporting young entrepreneurs, especially in under-resourced areas. “The leadership collective of our government remains committed to listening to the concerns, and to create platforms which can amplify the voices, and to work together in addressing the challenges facing young people” Premier Mabuyane said. Youth Day in the Eastern Cape holds deep historical and emotional significance. As a province steeped in the legacy of resistance, from the early liberation struggles to the anti-apartheid movement, commemorating Youth Day is not only a tribute to the fallen heroes of 1976 but a call to action for today's youth.

The Eastern Cape continues to produce some of South Africa's most politically conscious and active young leaders. Honouring Youth Day here serves as a reminder of the courage shown by past generations and inspires current youth to remain engaged in democratic processes, social justice, and community development.



Premier Mabuyane talking with one of the beneficiaries of agricultural inputs

TRADITIONAL LEADERS PROPOSE CHANGES TO THE WHITE PAPER ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT WHICH IS UNDER REVIEW

By Anelisa Mabece

In June 2025, the Eastern Cape Provincial House of Traditional and Khoi-San Leaders (ECHTKL) convened a two-day session to review the 1998 White Paper on Local Government (WPLG) in Mthatha in the OR Tambo District Municipality.

The two day session was meant to finalize the submission from the Eastern Cape Traditional Leadership, thus respond to the request for written comments on the discussion of the WPLG document under review.

The comments, guided by the Minister of CoGTA's notice published in the Government Gazette on 10 April 2025, are based on the questions outlined in Annexure 3 of the Discussion document.

A key concern raised during the session was the inadequate integration of the Traditional Leadership in the local government system within the current Local Government White Paper, as mandated by our Constitution.

"The role of traditional leaders in local government requires greater visibility and a clearly defined function. Furthermore, the "wall-to-wall" system of democratic and developmental Local Governance has proven ineffective for traditional communities," said Nkosi Mpumalanga Gwadiso, Chairperson of the Provincial HoTKL.

“We should be involved in regulating certain commercial activities within Traditional communities, including spaza shops and liquor trading. Finally, we should also be involved in local government systems, specifically in decision-making processes at the most appropriate and accessible level for the benefit of citizens.”

Nkosi Gwadiso expressed gratitude to the House members for their valuable contributions and to the Department's Legal Advisory Services for their legal expertise and guidance to “complete this significant undertaking.”



Nkosi Gwadiso

AMAMPONDOMISE KINGDOM HOSTS WINTER CUSTOMARY INITIATION LAUNCH

By Dumisani Lindi

On June 11, 2025, the Kingdom of AmaMpondomise, under the leadership of His Majesty King Zwelozuko Matiwane, hosted the 2025 Provincial Winter Customary Male Initiation Launch at Kroza Great Place, within the Kumkani Mhlontlo Local Municipality. Attendees included Kumkani Zwelozuko Matiwane, Chairperson of the Eastern Cape House of Traditional and Khoisan Leaders Nkosi Mpumalanga Gwadiso, members of the Provincial and Local houses, and representatives from organizations involved in Customary Male Initiation.

The speakers conveyed a unified message emphasizing a zero-tolerance policy towards lawlessness and illegal initiation practices. The keynote address, delivered by Nkosi Mpumalanga Gwadiso, commenced with an expression of gratitude to the Kingdom for hosting the event, stating, "We extend our appreciation to His Majesty and the Kingdom for hosting this significant event. It is appropriate to hold such an event within the AmaMpondomise Kingdom, as we have consistently held the belief that umdlanga mawubuyele komkhulu."

The organization has undertaken extensive outreach efforts throughout the Province, leveraging all available resources to reduce fatalities. "Despite these initiatives, which include the slogan "Mabaye bephila, babuye bephila, ziyazingca ngesiko lethu," the impact has been limited. Therefore, we implore parents to assume greater responsibility for their children's well-being. As Nkosi Gwadiso emphasized in closing," the well-being of children is the responsibility of parents, particularly men, who are encouraged to regularly visit initiation sites and ensure proper oversight.

Furthermore, Kumkani Zwelozuko Matiwane authorized the 2025 Winter Customary Male Initiation season and presided over the vehicle handover ceremony. These vehicles, donated by the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, the Department of Education, the Department of Health, and Right To Care, were presented by the King with the express purpose of supporting the initiation process and safeguarding the boys.



King Matiwane

L-R Ms Dumza Vuba, King Matiwane, Nkosi Xhanti Sigcawu and Mr Sidima Lalendle



Cars handed over for monitoring visits





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ULWALUKO OLUKHUSELEKILEYO

- Amakhwenkwe azakoluka mawahlolwe ekliniki.
- Abagulayo mabaphathe amayeza neepilisi emabhumeni.
 - Abakhwetha mabasele amanzi rhoqo.
- Chaza amabhuma angekho mthethweni komKhulu nasepolice station.
 - Abazali mabanike abantwana amanzi phambi kokoluka.
- IiNkosi maziqinisekise ulwaluko olusemthethweni kwindawo zazo
 - IiNkosi mazinceedisane namaqela ohlangulo.
- Abazali mabasebenzise iingcibi namaKhankatha asemthethweni.
- Abazali mabathumele abantwana kumabhuma asemthethweni.



Cogta MEC Zolile Williams



Nkosi Mpumalanga Gwadiso
Chairperson of the ECPHTKL

MABAYE BEPHILA BABUYE BEPHILA, SIYAZINGCA NGESIKO LETHU

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COGTA CHAMPIONS

FOR A BOLD NEW PUBLIC PARTICIPATION MODEL

By: Sonto Malinga

Mr. Mboniswa Nodlabi, Chief Director for Public Participation and Rapid Response at the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA), called for a radical shift in how communities engage with the government, urging citizens to move from being passive recipients to active partners in shaping their own development.

Delivering a powerful presentation during day one of the Public Participation and Rapid Response Forum, held in Senqu Local Municipality from 4-5 June 2025, Mr. Nodlabi emphasized the urgency of redefining public participation. “We must move from simply consulting communities to activating them as partners in governance. This is about building a participatory culture that empowers our people to take ownership of their development,” he stated. He highlighted that despite progressive laws enabling participation, the current system remains disjointed, reactive, and often lacks coordination across spheres of government. “Our people are beginning to define themselves outside their government, becoming passengers to an unknown destination. That must change. Government is not a savior, it is an agent of the people, and the people must lead,” he declared.



Attendees of the Public Participation and Rapid Response Forum

Mr. Nodlabi outlined a proposed Public Participation Model built on four key pillars: Development Planning, Social Facilitation, Stakeholder Management & Social Cohesion, and Community Complaints Management. He stressed that these pillars aim to institutionalize participation through ward-based structures that unite ward councilors, traditional leaders, civil society and government departments. The model, he said, seeks to move beyond event-based consultation toward strategic, coordinated action that empowers communities to influence policy, monitor implementation, and hold institutions accountable.

The forum also raised concerns about voter apathy ahead of the 2025/26 Local Government Elections. Mr. Nodlabi linked the decline in voter turnout to a deeper issue of public disillusionment with government. “Public participation must no longer be an afterthought. It must be the lifeblood of a democratic society. Communities need to understand that democracy is not what we are given, it is what we build together,” he concluded.

His address set the tone for a two-day dialogue aimed at repositioning public participation as a tool for civic empowerment, social cohesion and inclusive governance.



Mr Nodlabi

DEPUTY MINISTER MASEMOLA CONDUCTS OVERSIGHT VISIT TO BCM

By Vuyani Sibene

On the 29 April 2025 Deputy Minister of the department of National Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (Cogta), Dickson Masemola accompanied by Eastern Cape MEC for the department of Cogta, Zolile Williams conducted an oversight visit to the Buffalo City Metro Municipality (BCM). In attendance were key stakeholders such as Eskom, South African Local Government Association (SALGA), Amathola Water Board, National Treasury, Department of Water and Sanitation and Municipal Infrastructure Support Agent (MISA).

The oversight visit was conducted under the theme “Every Municipality Must Work,” which formed part of an ongoing series of strategic visits to identified priority Districts and Metros across the country. The Deputy Minister's visit was aimed at assessing the state of governance, service delivery, and institutional performance within the Metro, with a particular focus on strengthening accountability mechanisms, revitalizing governance structures, and addressing operational inefficiencies. Additionally, it was intended to serve as a catalyst for accelerated and effective service delivery, ensuring that the Metro functions optimally and responsively to meet the needs of its communities.

Speaking during the visit, Dr Masemola, expressed dissatisfaction with the state of governance and service delivery in the BCM. “The BCM is grappling with governance and service delivery challenges. The delegation has learnt that the municipality has spent large amounts of money on incomplete projects” said Dr Dickson Masemola

He said inaccurate billing system coupled with poor revenue collection were some of the concerning issues in BCM. “These issues need urgent attention. Not all is well. I have explained issues of engineering capacity, technical capacity, issues of finances and these matters impact on service delivery. Deputy Minister said the mayor of BCM did not hide anything. “She said there are challenges with water delivery and therefore, they require assistance,” Dr Masemola said.

Eastern Cape Cogta MEC, Zolile Williams, added that political interference in administrative matters was a major contributor to the challenges of the metro as it was the case with some of the councillor's in the council. “Politicians must get out of administration issues because it is that interference that makes things difficult for Buffalo City to function properly. So, politicians must oversee officials and not play politics,” MEC Williams said.

Executive Mayor for Buffalo City Metro, Princess Faku, says the challenges emanate from incompetent and inefficient senior officials. “We will rise above because everyone would know we are not witch hunting people, but people must do their jobs. The problem here is non accountability of the administration. So, now we are having this reinforcement of people coming. People must do their jobs or leave the city. That is where we are sitting now,” Faku elaborated. The municipality was given three months to come up with a turnaround and implementation plan.



Deputy Minister Masemola and Executive Mayor Faku

CHAIRPERSONS FORUM

SPEARHEADS LEADING CONVERSATIONS

By Anelisa Mabece

During a recent two-day Chairperson's Forum, the Eastern Cape House of Traditional and Khoisan leaders (ECHO TKL), engaged in thought-provoking presentations focused on visionary initiatives. These included the modernization of the Customary Male Initiation (CMI) registration process through a mobile application and the development of sustainable business concepts via hemp production, both aimed at benefiting local communities in the province.

Mr N (full name). Mxoli, Founder of the Somagwaza App, presented an electronic system designed to digitize the Traditional CMI registration process, wherein he emphasized the mobile application process as a crucial tool to regulate South Africa's traditional initiation practices by digitization.

"The digital application process aims to enhance safety, compliance, and accountability while preserving the cultural heritage of CMI. The mobile application seeks to address challenges in CMI, such as the disregard for safety protocols, lack of community cooperation, limited parental involvement, capacity constraints among practitioners, and rising crime rates in initiation schools," said Mr Mxoli.

According to Mr Mxoli, the digital application process will assist parents to utilise registered traditional surgeons who will be listed in the app. "Our primary goal is to safeguard the initiation process, prohibit harmful practices, and prioritize the safety of the initiate."

He added that the app is designed for use by parents, surgeons, caregivers, and t government for oversight purposes. Mr Mxoli explained, "Core features of the app include incident reporting, a review and rating system, and a health and safety hub providing health guidelines for initiates."

Ms Tamara Thomas of the Izenzo Agrivoltaics Project presented a renewable carbon and industrial initiative which is a comprehensive project aimed to leverage the environmental and economic benefits of wind and solar resources, combined with industrial hemp cultivation in the Eastern Cape.

Ms Thomas explained that the project seeks to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions while fostering socio-economic development in traditional communities. She stated, "As we embark on this significant endeavor, it is crucial to engage with traditional and Khoisan leaders for support and ensure they are informed of this substantial project within their jurisdiction." she added, "Our passion lies in developing the economy in this region, to create employment opportunities for the community and revitalise underutilized land."

Nkosi Mpumalanga Gwadiiso, Chairperson of the Eastern Cape HoTKL, welcomed the presentations, highlighting their critical and forward-thinking nature. "It is important for us to be informed of any developments in our communities to ensure we remain at the forefront," he said.



Ms Thomas of Izenzo Agrivoltaics project

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

THROUGH PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT

By Sabo Dlelengana

In a step towards strengthening community governance and enhance participatory development, the Department of CoGTA hosted a Stakeholder Engagement Skills Development session in May 2025 at the Nywarha Great Place under the jurisdiction of the Bashee Traditional Council (TC) in Idutywa.

The choice of Nywarha as the host location was both symbolic and strategic in that it is situated in one of the more rural parts of the Eastern Cape, faces challenges common to many traditional communities including limited access to formal governance training, slow service delivery, and weak linkages between traditional leadership and government structures.

By bringing the engagement directly to Nywarha, the department demonstrated its commitment to decentralization, inclusivity, and its intent to strengthen the role of traditional leaders in community development. This move also ensured that the knowledge and skills communicated were contextualized within the lived realities of the local community.

CoGTA played a central role in both organizing and facilitating the session with officials from the different units leading discussions, providing information. The interactions ensured that the voices of traditional leaders and community members were heard throughout the process.

An official from CoGTA, Mr Zuko Boza from the Directorate of Traditional Rural Development Facilitation said traditional leadership structures are not parallel to government but are an integral part of governance, especially in rural communities. "By investing in stakeholder engagement capacity, we are promoting stronger, more cohesive, and better-governed communities," said Mr Boza.

Nkosi Xhanti Sigcau of the Bashee TC welcomed the initiative as a "much-needed investment in our ability to serve our people. We have always engaged with the community, but this training sharpened our skills to do so more effectively and inclusively."

A youth participant added, "It was the first time I felt included in a session like this. I now understand better how to engage both my community and authorities."

Mr Mazaleni Luzuko from King Hintsa TVET College



Attendees of the Stakeholder Engagement Skills Development session

MINISTER MASEMOLA LEADS OVERSIGHT VISIT AMID GOVERNANCE AND SERVICE DELIVERY CHALLENGES IN MAKANA

By Sonto Malinga

In a high-level oversight visit to Makana Local Municipality in May 2025, Deputy Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA), Dr. Namane Dickson Masemola, accompanied by Eastern Cape MEC for CoGTA, Zolile Williams, delivered a firm message: “We cannot afford to be casual about governance. The people of this country are our concern, and they deserve a municipality that works.”

The visit, held under the national banner “Every Municipality Must Work”, forms part of a broader government initiative to accelerate interventions in distressed municipalities. The spotlight on Makana is not without cause. Years of infrastructure decay, administrative underperformance, and persistent audit disclaimers have eroded public confidence.

“Makana is a critical municipality. Administrative failures are compromising the entire system. We must grab the issue by the scruff of the neck and push forward,” said Dr Masemola.

Presenting the status of the municipality, Mayor of Makana, Councillor Yandiswa Vara said municipality was currently under a Section 139(5) intervention. A Financial Recovery Plan (FRP) is being implemented following years of financial mismanagement. The plan was reviewed and adopted with recommendations from the National Treasury in March 2025. The municipality remains in the “rescue phase” of the FRP but has committed to exiting this phase by the end of the current financial year,” said Cllr Vara.

Speaking during the visit, MEC Williams said despite institutional frameworks such as the Audit Committee, Municipal Public Accounts Committee (MPAC) and Risk Committee being in place, performance remains uneven. The Auditor-General has once again issued a disclaimer audit opinion, citing unresolved misstatements dating back to 2019, poor record management, and non-submission of required information.

“We can’t cover for people who are compromising our work,” said MEC Williams. “The Council must hold people accountable and cascade the spirit of commitment through the administrative chain.” Service delivery is another sore point. The state of water infrastructure has drawn national concern. “The issue here does not only affect local politics—it impacts the entire government system,” MEC Williams stated. “Engineers must provide scientific assessments before we can address the residents properly.”

MEC Williams added that multiple stakeholders, including Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS), COGTA, Municipal Infrastructure Service Agency (MISA)

and Development Bank of South Africa (DBSA) have stepped in to support water and sanitation interventions. “Notably, the James Kleyhans Water Treatment Works is undergoing a final upgrade phase, and a Water Quality Assurance Scientist has been appointed to improve regulatory compliance. Despite these strides, the Mayfield Wastewater Treatment Works remains dilapidated and partially dysfunctional,” said MEC.

In response to cable theft and vandalism plaguing Makana’s electricity infrastructure, National Treasury approved the municipality’s participation in the Eskom Debt Relief Programme, and smart meter installations have begun to reduce losses and improve revenue collection.

MEC Williams continued to point out that the municipality’s historical financial challenges were reflected in its escalating arrear debt, which exceeded R1.4 billion as of March 2025. “However, it has made significant progress in paying off historic Eskom and DWS accounts, and grant performance has improved dramatically, with 100% expenditure reported in the last fiscal year.

Through support from the Risk Adjusted Strategy (RAS) framework, Municipal Infrastructure Grant (MIG) spending has reached 85% as of March 2025. MEC Williams praised these improvements but stressed that effective oversight must follow. “We are trying hard to build a strong oversight model that makes municipalities functional. We have been far too casual about training councillors. We cannot take for granted that they understand their roles,” said MEC Williams.

The visit also acknowledged ongoing and concluded investigations. The municipality is under active investigation by the Special Investigating Unit (SIU), which is probing allegations of maladministration under Proclamation 207 of 2024. A search and seizure operation were executed in November 2024. Internally, disciplinary action has already led to the dismissal of the Senior Manager for Engineering Services, with financial compensation ordered through arbitration.

Despite the challenges, the municipality has made progress: acquiring a landfill bulldozer and fleet vehicles, cutting legacy contracts, saving on overtime and waste management, and boosting revenue through increased prepaid electricity sales.

As Dr. Masemola concluded, he reassured the residents of Makana that the government is committed to accountability and renewal. “Once we have concluded our discussions and developed an action plan, rest assured, you will receive a full account of the memorandum you submitted. We are here to serve, and we will not walk away from this challenge,” said Deputy Minister.



L-R: MEC Williams and Deputy Minister Masemola



Mayor of Makana Municipality, Cllr Vara

INTRODUCTION OF RAS YIELDS POSITIVE RESULTS ON GRANT SPENDING

By Thando Sonjica

The Eastern Cape province has invariably, over the years, experienced underspending on conditional grants, with funds meant to address infrastructure backlogs in pursuit of the universal access to basic services, returned to national revenue fund.

To arrest this perennial tragedy, in March 2023, MEC for the department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA), Zolile Williams introduced the Risk Adjusted Strategy (RAS), anchored on the Non-Negotiables thresholds, designed to completely eradicate grant underspending by municipalities.

Out of 15 (fifteen) Municipal Conditional Grants received by EC municipalities through the Division of Revenue Act (DORA), the MEC piloted RAS only on 4 (four) major grants received by municipalities. These are Municipal Infrastructure Grant (MIG), Integrated National Electrification Programme (INEP) Grant, Water Services Infrastructure Grant (WSIG) and Regional Infrastructure Grant (RBIG). COGTA together with Provincial Municipal Infrastructure Technical Task Team (PMIT3) sector departments of Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation (DMRE, Water and Sanitation (DWS), Provincial Treasury (PT), South African Local

Government Association (SALGA) National Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs DCOG, and Municipal Infrastructure Services Agency (MISA), monitored on a monthly basis the performance in terms of the DORA grant requirements in line with the RAS framework.

As of January 2025, Grants Analysis Performance with regards to MIG shows that the programme has been gradually improving from 2020/21 to 2022/23.

“Due to the introduction of RAS in 2023/24, the spending jumped to 61% surpassing the RAS end December threshold of 60%. Unfortunately, in 2024/25 the overspending regressed to 57% due poor spending, mainly by OR Tambo DM (47%) and Alfred Nzo DM (47%),” said Mr Tshitsho Majavu who is the Director for Municipal Infrastructure Services in Cogta.

With regards to INEP the programme has been progressively improving from 2020/21 to 2022/23 and achieved 61% in 2022/23 before the introduction of the RAS. “In 2024/25 INEP is the only grant that managed to surpass the RAS end December threshold of 60% and achieved 67%, said Mr Majavu.

In respect to WSIG, Mr Majavu said the programme spending has been fluctuating from 2020/21 to 2022/23. “Due to RAS introduction in 2023/24, the spending jumped from 28% in 2022/23 to 38% in 2023/24, although grossly below the desired RAS end December threshold of 60%, explained Mr Majavu.

Explaining the performance of ERBIG, Mr Majavu said the programme spending has been gradually improving from 2020/21 to 2022/23. “In the current financial year 2024/25, the spending improved to 36%, although grossly below the desired RAS end December threshold of 60%, said Mr Majavu.

He added that MEC Williams has extended RAS support to municipalities in 2025/26, based on the 7 (seven) infrastructure development thematic areas. “The multi-sectoral PMIT3 has consolidated the segmented interventions into one package, known as a “Provincial Municipal Infrastructure Management Improvement Programme”: The 7 (seven) support and improvement programmes are: Procurement, Contracts Management, Project Management, Capex Expenditure, Opex, Infrastructure Audit and Professionalization.

However, Mr Majavu said the RAS implementation challenges are due some municipalities not adhering to RAS and hide behind the DORA Grant Frameworks as legislated frameworks. For this, he proposed that the province must ensure that municipalities internally adopt RAS as their policy framework than a strategy, to move from adherence to compliance.

Additionally, he said late procurement deep into the financial year, beyond December, was “gross violation” of the RAS Non-Negotiables.

“To avoid late procurement, the municipal RAS policy framework should enforce consequence management to those municipal officials who are directly to ensure procurement is prioritized and concluded before July,” said Mr Majavu.



Mr Majavu

DID YOU KNOW ?

YOUR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

It is your right to:

- ▲ Receive health education, good quality healthcare and counselling.
- ▲ Adequate supervision by an adult or care-giver you trust.
- ▲ An approved traditional surgeon/ healthcare practitioner to perform the circumcision.
- ▲ Clean hygienic equipment must be used.
- ▲ Demand the registration certificate of a prospective initiation school and traditional surgeon.

TRADITIONAL MALE INITIATION

It is your responsibility to:

- ▲ Communicate any problems you may have to your parents, caregiver, healthcare worker, social workers, friends, etc.
- ▲ Report any illegal or unregistered initiation school to your nearest police station.
- ▲ Drink water.
- ▲ Use medication for your ailments.

PDMC COLLABORATES WITH SANLAM TO CURB DISASTERS

By Vuyani Sibene

In May 2025, CoGTA and Santam formalized a strategic partnership through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) whose primary objective is to establish a framework for future collaboration and interaction between parties. This MOU encourages participation and cooperation by fostering close working relationships between Santam and the EC Provincial Disaster Management Centre (EC PDMC) to facilitate the sharing of information and collaboration on specific initiatives. In this respect, the EC PDMC will assume responsibility for the integration and execution of all identified initiatives, supported by Santam, as part of their operational plans.

Speaking at the signing ceremony Mr Philela Mabandla, Director for the PDMC said the MoU was established for a five-year period, focusing on risk reduction measures and mitigation strategies, thus shift the emphasis from disaster response. "This partnership with Santam will focus on preventative measures and preparedness for hazards prevalent in the Eastern Cape," stated Mr Mabandla.

The Chief Director for Municipal Basic and Development Services, Mr Luthando Plaatjie, emphasized that the Santam slogan, "Freedom," underscores the imperative to enhance quality of life, recognize disaster management as a collective responsibility. He directed municipalities to approach this partnership with a sense of obligation and pride, clarifying that the province, through Cogta, primarily serves a coordinating role.

Dr. Moses Khangele, Santam Stakeholders Programmes Manager, said as an insurance company, these challenges directly impact insurance claims, including fire damage, floods, and other natural disasters.

"Our aim is to educate communities to reduce fatalities. Recognizing the global presence of natural disasters exacerbated by climate change. The partnership aims to build capacity to manage risks associated with fire, floods, and (other) man-made disasters, to realise a disaster-free provinces," said Mr Khangele.

Ms. Charity Sihunu, Acting Deputy Director General (DDG) in CoGTA, acknowledged the government's fiscal challenges and the constant threat of hazards, both natural and technological.



Dr Khangele of Santam




L-R Mr Mabandla and Dr Khangele signing MOU


"The province is increasingly vulnerable to severe hydro-meteorological events, including storms, floods, tornadoes, droughts, and veld fires. In response, public servants are encouraged to be innovative to better serve communities and mitigate disasters in the Eastern Cape."

She added that the support from Santam, including equipment and training, falls under grants, donations, and sponsorships, and will be managed in accordance with regulation 21.2 of the Treasury Regulations.


In addition, she said the previous collaboration with Santam, was the provision of 5,000-litre water tanks to fire stations in the Nelson Mandela Bay Metro and Sara Baartman District Municipalities during the 2022/2023 financial year. "We will ensure the proper care and support of the equipment provided by Santam," said Ms Sihunu.



Province of the
EASTERN CAPE
COOPERATIVE GOVERNANCE
& TRADITIONAL AFFAIRS



South African
Weather Service



**EC PROVINCIAL
VELD FIRE PROHIBITION
NOTICE 2025/26**

The Eastern Cape Provincial Disaster Management Centre (EC-PDMC) hereby advises that due to the Veld Fire Season and prevailing Drought conditions, no burning or open fires as defined are permitted in the following specified areas and periods:

SPECIFIED AREAS AND PERIODS

1. Amathole District and Local Municipalities from 1st August – 31st October 2025	8. Kouga Local Municipality as from 1st November 2025-28 February 2026
2. Alfred Nzo District and Local Municipalities from 15th June – 15th October 2025	9. Koukamma Municipality as from 1st November 2025-31 March 2026
3. Buffalo City Metro Municipality 1st August-31st October 2025	10. Makana Local Municipality as from 1st July 2025 until 31 October 2025
4. Blue Crane Route Local Municipality as from 1st August 2025 - 30 April 2026	11. Nelson Mandela Metro Municipality from 1st November 2025-30th April 2026
5. Chris Hani District and Local Municipalities from 1st July – 31st December 2025	12. Ndlambe Local Municipality as from 1st January 2026-31 May 2026
6. Dr Beyers Naude Local Municipality as from 1st August 2025-31 March 2026.	13. O.R. Tambo District and Local Municipalities from 1st August 2025-31st October 2025
7. Joe Gqabi District and Local Municipalities from 1st July 31st December 2025	14. Sundays River Valley Local Municipality as from 1st November 2025-31 January 2026

BURNING WILL BE ALLOWED UNDER THE FOLLOWING STRICT CONDITIONS:

- The Chief Fire Officers of the Metro's, Local / District Municipality or in the absence of a Chief Fire Officer, the Fire Protection Officer (FPO) of the local Fire Protection Association (FPA) must approve all burning operations according to their respective burning permit systems and Community Fire Safety By-laws.
- Landowners and Traditional leaders must apply a minimum of seven (7) days notice for pre-approval.
- Final approval for burning must be obtained on the day of the proposed burn.
- All bordering landowners must be informed of burning operations in terms of the National Veld and Forest Fire Act (Act 101 of 1998) (NVFFA).
- The National Veld and Forest Fire Act 101 of 1998 places a duty on all landowners to have all precautions in place to prevent a veld fire from spreading or causing damage.

The public is urged to be extremely vigilant and to report any fires to the Local Municipal Fire Stations or Fire Protection Associations, alternatively to the **Ambulance services at (10177), Police services at (10111), and 112 Cell phone emergency number.**

Any person contravening this notice may be liable and face prosecution under the Fire Brigade Services Act 99 of 1987, National Veld and Forest Fire Act 101 of 1998 or any other applicable legislation. For any further information kindly contact **Mr P. Mabandla - 071 604 3160 or Mr CJ Alexander - 072 424 7475** at the Provincial Disaster Management Centre.

EASTERN CAPE FIRE SERVICE EMERGENCY CONTACT NUMBERS

Alfred Nzo DM Mr L. Gwiji 039 254 0748/9 071 870 6483 gwiji@andam.gov.za luncedo.gwiji@gmail.com	Amathole DM Mr S. Falethi 043 831 1275/1084 078 634 6401 shauhi@amathole.gov.za shauhi@gmail.com	Amathlasi LM Mr Mouton No landline 062 329 9455 fpmosier@gmail.com	Raymond Mthlaba LM Mr M. J. Letlaba 046 645 7402/1 066 710462 letlaba@raymondmthlaba.gov.za mjlthlaba@gmail.com	Buffalo City MM Mr T. Thompson 043 705 9000 073 692 3282 ThembileT@buffalocity.gov.za	Chris Hani DM Mr S. Dywili 0800 100 100 083 491 0750 dywili@chrislandam.gov.za
Joe Gqabi DM Mr B. Nxumalo 045 979 3146 078 244 3078 benjamin@jgdm.gov.za rxumalo.majors.ben@gmail.com	OR Tambo DM Mr W. Bisi 047 591 6400 073 070 5560 bixivictor7@gmail.com	Nelson Mandela MM Mr N. Whiteboy 079 490 0555 041 585 1555 NWhiteboy@nmandelametro.gov.za	Sarah Baartman DM Mr K. Majoqweni 0800 222 238 066 710462 KMajoqweni@sbdm.co.za	Makana LM Mr W. Welkom 046 622 4444 welkom@makana.gov.za	Ndlambe LM Mr M. Sulu 079 440 4112 046 624 1111 msulu@ndlambe.gov.za
Blue Crane LM Mr S. Suvini 042 243 1281 079 557 7295 stivysuvini@gmail.com	Sundays River LM Mr J. Mokoena 042 230 7788 072 648 3277 jmokoena@gmail.com JongweloM@svrm.gov.za	Kouga LM Mr D. Barnard 042 291 0250 081 262 4366 dbarnard@kouga.gov.za	Koukamma LM Mr J. Conway 042 288 7320 083 940 6807 john.conway@koukamma.gov.za	Dr Beyers Naude LM Mr B. Heremid 060 425 0113 084 256 1536 berandienb@beldm.gov.za	

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION PLAN

UNVEILED TO GUIDE MUNICIPAL GOVERNANCE AHEAD OF 2026 LOCAL ELECTIONS

By: Sonto Malinga

During the Public Participation and Rapid Response Advisory Forum (PP&RR) held in Senqu Local Municipality in June 2025, Mr. Mamnkeli Ngam, Director of Communication Management, delivered a presentation titled “Setting Government Agenda Towards the 2026 Local Government Elections (LGE).” In his address laid out a strategic, phased communication action plan aimed at strengthening government credibility, improving stakeholder relations, and safeguarding the reputation of municipalities as South Africa prepares for the 2026 LGE.

Mr. Ngam emphasized the centrality of communication in governance, stating, “We are not just preparing for an election; we are shaping the foundation of participatory democracy. Effective communication is a strategic support function at our disposal that enables transparency, accountability, and citizen empowerment.”

He outlined the key purpose of the plan, which is to mitigate communication risks during both foreseen and unexpected events, protect the government's reputation, and mainstream the communication agenda across departments and spheres of government.

“We need to be proactive, not reactive. Waiting for a crisis before we speak is not a strategy, it is a failure,” he added.

Grounding the plan within the country's legislative framework, Mr. Ngam referred to Chapter 2 of the Constitution the Bill of Rights which guarantees freedom of expression, including the right to receive and impart information. He further cited the Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA) and the Municipal Systems Act, both of which underscore the importance of public participation and access to information.

“The law mandates us not only to inform but to include our people in governance processes so that they become their own liberators. We are a government of the people, for the people and by the people,” he said.

Addressing the increasing trend of service delivery protests, Mr. Ngam presented an environmental analysis showing that many of these protests are not always about the absence of service, but often about the absence of communication. “When people do not know, they speculate. When they speculate, they mobilize themselves hence communication is our first line of defense to mitigate any form of community protests and restore public confidence to our government,” he warned.

The presentation identified the underlying causes of municipal dysfunctionality, including poor communication systems, lack of integrated messaging, and absence of community feedback loops. To address this, the plan proposes a structured approach based on clear pillars: risk and reputation management, stakeholder engagement, coordinated messaging, and responsive media handling.

Mr. Ngam urged municipalities to institutionalize these principles across all departments. “We must professionalize communication. That means skilled staff, dedicated resources, and clear messaging frameworks. We can no longer afford to treat communication as an afterthought,” he stated firmly.

Finally, the plan proposes a phased communication rollout aligned with the election cycle, starting with a situational analysis, followed by the development of localized campaigns and, ultimately, issue-based communication aligned to community needs.

“Evaluation is key,” he concluded. “We must constantly assess whether we are reaching our people, whether our message is clear, and whether it's making an impact.”

The presentation was a clarion call to elevate communication as a strategic function in local governance. As the country heads towards the 2026 LGE, the plan offered by Mr. Ngam provides a critical roadmap for rebuilding trust between the state and the citizens it serves.



Mr Ngam